

# The Christian News-Letter

Edited by  
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DEAR MEMBER,

The impact of tremendous events is forcing us to face two religious issues, which we must clearly distinguish.

The first is whether our faith in God is sufficient to stand any strain, even that of defeat. I had a letter last week from a chaplain in the army who tells me that the question sometimes put to him is, "Padre, what will you people say if we lose this war?" It raises, as he says, the profoundest questions. But one thing at least seems clear—that, if Christianity means anything at all, it is a message about what is eternal and unchanging through all the vicissitudes of this mortal life. It is faith in God, in Christ, in truth, in love that can sustain us in every experience of life and inspire us to contend against the forces opposed to them even in face of the greatest odds.

The second religious issue which we cannot escape to-day, since it compels us to the most momentous decisions, is whether God is concerned only with our eternal salvation or also with the historical struggles of men—only with the Church or also with civilisation. I cannot doubt that the God whom we worship in Jesus Christ is also the Lord of history, and that the growing meanings which are built into the fabric of society and wrought into tradition, custom and institutions by the toil and sacrifice of successive generations are part of His plan for human life.

It does not follow, even if we believe this, that because the British Commonwealth seems to us to embody a higher conception of life than the tyrannies we are fighting, God *must* give us victory. The religious mind has known that life does not offer such simple and clear solutions of its problems. The righteous, even if they *are* righteous, do not always triumph. That God's ways are not our ways is the first lesson of religion.

We cannot, therefore, on religious grounds take success for granted. We can only offer ourselves to God to be the instrument of His purposes. Deeper than the prayer for victory must be the prayer that we may be made worthy of it. "*Deserve* victory" must be our battle-cry. From that standpoint let us consider the issues at stake, so far as our finite minds can comprehend them.

## THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS

I wrote about this last week, but no apology is needed for returning to it. The French Government have withdrawn from the struggle. The United States have not entered it—perhaps may never enter it. The British Empire has to sustain the defence of free institutions practically alone. Has this fact a *religious* significance?

The British Commonwealth of Nations is a federation of nations, inhabiting parts of all the five continents, including the most diverse races and peoples at widely different stages of moral, intellectual and political development, and yet animated to some extent by a common spirit and purpose and achieving a substantial, even if imperfect, harmony of interests, ideals and aspirations. For this reason it provides a basis and

example for the future ordering of the relations of nations and peoples ; this was recognised by Hitler in one of his last talks with Sir Nevile Henderson. In political and social progress the most modest practical achievement outweighs any amount of theory.

While critics can find plentiful evidence of greed, injustice and sloth in the history of the Empire, it is none the less true that it has been built up by the devotion, idealism and self-sacrificing enterprise of many individuals. What our fathers have, by the grace of God, created has a spiritual and moral quality that evokes the faith and expectation of the peoples of the dominions and colonies. They are ready to spring to arms on behalf of the mother country in its time of need. Large forces from the dominions are at this hour massing in this country for the defence of its shores. The peoples of the dependent Empire have shown by their acts that, whatever faults they have found in our rule, they infinitely prefer it to Nazi domination.

If these things were not so familiar that we take them for granted, we should be filled with wonder that it has been given to men, in spite of their limited minds and egoistic impulses, to forge on so vast a scale these intangible bonds of mutual trust and common purpose.

This unique achievement in history has been our destiny. It has fallen to us to make the first attempt to create a world-order. Since we have done it, as was inevitable, imperfectly, and since we have been content too much to enjoy the privileges, rather than to discharge the responsibilities, of empire, other nations have envied us what are regarded as our possessions. The Empire may in consequence prove to be our fate. On the other hand, if the present challenge were to recall us to our historic mission, it might be our providence.

We are blind indeed if we fail to see at this moment, when all is at stake, that the British Commonwealth is a world institution and does not live to itself alone. I have asked what is the religious significance of this fateful hour. Is it not a demand that we should affirm at a new and higher level the essential values on which the British Commonwealth has been founded? Is it not that we should strive to *be*, not speciously and vacillatingly, but whole-heartedly and passionately, in the eyes of the world and for the world, what our history and destiny require of us? That we should set ourselves to proclaim and realise uncompromisingly just those things which the dictatorships deny and scorn? In this, and in no other way, can we hope to evoke counter forces powerful enough to stem and turn back the swelling tides of evil.

Merely to defend what we are and have will not suffice; we must *create* the good which, in virtue of its truth, will have power to shape the future. Can we dedicate ourselves anew to a pact of mutual justice, a new social covenant, between leaders of industry and industrial workers, between machine workers and cultivators of the soil, between richer and poorer nations, between more advanced and less advanced peoples? If this were what we really and whole-heartedly intend, the situation would quickly change.

All this we have to learn to understand, and to help the nation to understand, not as an ideal of our own choosing, but as that to which we are irrevocably called by our heritage and our past. It is something that for this reason is already part of ourselves. Through the mysterious providence that has guided our history, the kind of society we are called to create already exists potentially in us. We have to use to the full a talent that has been given to us. We must be true to that which gives meaning to our historical existence as a people, or perish. It is through no desert of our own, but by God's grace already given to us that these things might come to be.

## THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

A new volume by Dr. J. C. Jung, *The Integration of the Personality* (Kegan Paul, 15s.), published this year, contains a chapter on what is coming to be known as the collective unconscious. A great advance was made in our knowledge of human nature when it was found that underlying the conscious life of the individual there are hidden, unconscious forces at work determining his behaviour in ways of which he is wholly unaware. Evidence is accumulating that below this personal unconscious there is a deeper layer that does not derive from personal experience but is inborn; that is not individual but universal, in the sense that its content and the modes of behaviour to which it gives rise are more or less the same in all men everywhere.

The existence of this deep background of forces beyond the control of the human will helps us to understand how it has come about that we are involved in a war which the overwhelming majority of people, even in Germany, did not want. Mankind has been swept from its moorings by hidden powers working in a contrary direction to men's conscious choices. I do not suggest that this is the whole explanation of the war; among its most powerful causes is that within the different nations there existed economic conflicts which were left unsolved, and these set up strains which became intolerable so that war presented itself as a means of escape. But the unspeakable disaster to Western civilisation ought to open men's eyes to the fact that they are in the grip of forces that can overpower their conscious choices. There is demonstrated on a world scale the truth which St. Paul found in his own experience: "The good which I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise." It is not by denying, but by acknowledging, the existence of these hidden powers that man can find salvation. The first step towards recovery is that man should be cured of his proud trust in himself; that he should become afraid, in Jung's phrase, of his own God-almightiness.

Already before the present war many of the wisest minds were beginning to perceive how little man's confidence in his own self-sufficiency accorded with the facts. His arrogant claim to be the master of his fate and captain of his soul was seen to be a delusion. The individual personality is not something complete in itself, a closed citadel. It is open on every side to invading forces. Growing knowledge tends to support the Biblical view of the soul as a battleground between the contending powers of demonic possession and divine salvation.

Real as are these hidden powers, there is no need to be afraid of them, since the grace of God is a reality. By trust in God a man is freed from their dominion. In surrendering himself to the control of a dominant purpose his personality achieves a growing unity and stability. The Holy Spirit harmonises the conscious and the unconscious sides of life.

What we are learning about the collective unconscious has a profound meaning for the present situation. The real conflict is in the spiritual world. Evil to-day has obtained such an ascendancy that the whole spiritual climate has become infected. But if the forces of good in the universe are stronger than those of evil—if God reigns, not Satan—then the very fury of evil must evoke contrary forces to overcome it. In that assurance lies our hope. Let us, therefore, give thanks to God and take courage.

## THE WORK OF CONTINENTAL MISSIONS

In the flood of destruction let loose by the war we cannot afford to forget its effect on the work of the Christian Church overseas. The missionary activi-

ties of the Protestant Churches on the continent of Europe have suffered arrest or been brought temporarily to a complete standstill. An account has already been given of the effect of the war on German missions (C.N.L. No. 5). The happenings of recent weeks have dealt a severe blow to the missions of other countries on the Continent.

The largest field affected is the Dutch East Indies. Here nearly three hundred Dutch and over two hundred German missionaries were at work. There is a native Protestant Christian community of approximately a million and a half. Of these more than 400,000 are Batak Christians, the result of seventy years of German missionary labours. With the German occupation of Holland, the Dutch missionary societies are unable to remit funds to their missions and have appealed to America for a sum of 60,000 florins.

Another field that has been severely hit is Madagascar. Here there is a Protestant Christian community of more than 400,000. The largest missions are Norwegian (66 missionaries) and French (29 missionaries).

The French Protestant Churches have been pre-eminent in missionary zeal and have a larger and more extended missionary activity in proportion to their size than almost any other evangelical body. The Paris Missionary Society is carrying on work in Madagascar, French Equatorial Africa, the Cameroons, Togoland, Basutoland, Barotseland, Tahiti and New Caledonia. When the war broke out a large number of missionaries were called to the colours, and the income of the society was seriously affected. There is no information yet about the result of the German occupation of France, but its effect on the Society must have been annihilating.

The Norwegian and Danish Churches are no longer able to send funds to their missions, and the power of the Churches in Sweden and Finland to do so is severely restricted. There are Norwegian missions in Madagascar, China and India; Danish in Manchuria, India and Nigeria; Swedish in China, India, South Africa and Central Asia; and Finnish in China, South-West Africa and the Tibetan frontier of India.

There is a vigorous life in many of the younger Churches, which are growing in autonomy, leadership and self-support, more particularly in the Dutch East Indies and Madagascar. But they cannot support their western pastors and teachers, nor without loss dispense with their counsel and help. The missionary societies in Great Britain and especially in North America, in spite of their own straitened resources, are doing what they can to provide help for these younger Churches, but the utmost aid that they can give falls far short of the need.

Yours sincerely,

*J. H. De laan*

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